



2-19-1911

## Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to Philander C. Knox, February 19, 1911

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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### Recommended Citation

Huntington-Wilson, Francis Mairs, "Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to Philander C. Knox, February 19, 1911" (1911). *Correspondence With Philander C. Knox*. 31.  
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY.

MEMORANDUM.

Sunday, February 19, 1911.

Dear W. Secretary,

Here is the old letter I spoke of the other day when you were saying that my office could please you more if it were called "for foreign affairs" or something which would entice more visitors to be content without seeing the head of the Cabinet himself. Of course for this the office ought to have the sort of near-cabinet status that it is sought to give that of Secy to the President — who is not, however, Vice President (yet!).

Please read it some day if you have time & care to.

Yrs. H.W.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

September 20, 1910.

Dear Mr. Secretary,

*Only communicated  
Sept. 25, 1910  
M.*

The wording of the President's telegram about Panama may have been without personal significance, but his overruling in four instances the Department's recommendations, - action which I of course hope may prove to have been for the best, - makes me pause to think. This makes it more difficult, too, for me to avoid wondering whether there may not have been in the language of the telegram a personal significance of dislike or distrust of me on the part of the President.

Now



Now if the President does perhaps feel unfriendly or lacking in confidence in me, it occurs to me that I ought to ask you to assure yourself as to his attitude, and, if you find it to be unfavorable, to consider whether your own convenience and the best interests of your administration of the Department do not perhaps demand that the official who must be your right-hand man and the one responsible when you are absent be a man to whom the President is entirely friendly and in whom he has thorough confidence, - and whether this would not involve a change.

As you know, I met the President ten years ago in Japan and again in the same country



country in 1905, and his kind action was the determining cause of my appointment as 3<sup>rd</sup> Assistant Secretary in June 1906. I have never, however, had any real contact with him and I do not know how he could have got any particular feeling toward me one way or the other, unless favorable feeling based upon your own friendly remarks. However, besides the absence of any sign of personal interest (of which one could not of course complain!) I am bound to say that the general attitude of the White House towards my office has not, I think, been such as to tend towards making upon the diplomatic corps and the public an impression calculated to give the office that prestige so necessary to its efficiency and to its greatest usefulness to you.

You know me so well that I need not reiterate my appreciation of all I owe  
to



to you nor my complete satisfaction so long  
as I am able to render service entirely satis-  
-factory to you. But I think the apparent  
non-essentials count for a good deal in  
diplomacy and so I venture to suggest one or  
two things that would clarify matters, and,  
if no substance were found in my apprehension,  
would place the second office in the first  
department in a more well defined position.

I can make these suggestions, - seemingly  
wholly selfish ones, - the less ungraciously, I hope,  
because they are practically identical with ones  
I made in 1906 and in 1908 without the slightest  
thought of myself in connection with the office  
of Assistant Secretary of State. They are changes  
in designations and an increase in salary.  
Our department being that of the combined  
prime ministry and ministry for foreign affairs,  
it seems to me that the second officer in it  
may



may well be differentiated somewhat from the corresponding officials of other departments and may usefully be given a standing commensurate with the position he has to assume towards the diplomatic corps and the public. It seems to me also that he should have a salary which would contribute somewhat more towards the expense incidental to his inevitable official entertaining.

May I then repeat substantially the suggestions of 1906 and now ask whether Congress cannot be asked to change the designation of this office to that of Principal Assistant Secretary of State, to abolish the numerical designations of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> assistant secretaryships of State, to change the designation of the Director of the Consular Service to that of an assistant secretaryship of State, to abolish the office of Chief Clerk, and to add the salary of that office to that



that of the Principal Assistant Secretary of State?  
This would have the merit of calling for no additional appropriation and, as for the office of Chief Clerk, it has always seemed to me a fifth wheel in our Department, as you will recall from the memoranda of 1906 and 1908.

Please do not feel, after reading this, that I attach undue importance to these matters. If you do feel so, then "I never said it"! And in any event please believe that whether you see your way clear to doing what I ask or not I am always sensible of the fine opportunities you have already given me and always devoted to your service.

Yours very sincerely,  
William H. Wilson